SPINOZA'S EARLIEST PHILOSOPHICAL YEARS, 1655-61

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New light has been thrown on the question of how Spinoza developed intellectually from a student of Jewish thought to a radical modern thinker. The view of the first biographical documents, that he was taught a rigid Talmudic orthodoxy by the rabbis, rebelled, and after his excommunication studied Latin and learned about modern thought (Wolf 1928; Colerus 1706; Bayle 1697), has been challenged by studies of I. S. Révah, myself, and others. Also, the view that Spinoza developed his new outlook mainly out of Jewish medieval thinkers (Wolfson 1934) now needs to be revised.

Starting with Révah's *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado*, and his two articles on the state of affairs when Spinoza broke with the Jewish community, we were shown that there were heretical thinkers associated with young Spinoza, namely Juan de Prado and Daniel Ribera.[1] Prado, who is known mainly from the attacks on him by Orobio de Castro,[2] had apparently become a sceptic and/or deist in Inquisitorial Spain. He, ten years Spinoza's senior, came to Amsterdam a year before Spinoza's excommunication.[3] Révah found that he, Spinoza and Ribera, according to the Ets Haim records, were accused at the same time of teaching cri-

[1]Révah 1959; 1964, pp. 357-431; 1970, pp. 542-58; 1971, pp. 574-89; 1972, pp. 641-53.

[2]Orobrio de Castro, *Epistola* and *Carta*. These works exist in manuscript in several libraries in Europe, Israel and America. Révah published a text of the *Epistola Invecta* in Révah 1959. On Orobio de Castro, see Kaplan 1982. (This work will appear in English.)

[3]Biographical details are given in Révah 1959.

tical views about the Bible and the Jewish tradition, views reflected in what we know, thanks to Révah, of Prado's theory about why the laws of nature should take precedence over the Law of Moses (cf. Révah 1984; 1970ff.).

In many studies over more than twenty years, I have sought to show the impact of Isaac La Peyrère's thought on the rise of modern Biblical criticism, and on Spinoza specifically (Popkin 1987b; 1978). La Peyrère's book, *Prae-Adamitae*, appeared in Amsterdam in 1655.[4] Spinoza owned a copy and used it extensively in his *TTP*, as Leo Strauss had earlier shown.[5] In going through the material Révah had unearthed, I found that some of the heretical theses of La Peyrère were being espoused by Prado before Spinoza's excommunication (Popkin 1987b, p. 85, and 1978, p. 189). La Peyrère had been living in the Spanish Netherlands, as the agent of the Prince of Condé, in 1654, and living next door to Queen Christina of Sweden who had just abdicated her throne. Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, one of the teachers at the school Spinoza attended, came to see the Queen in late 1654, and while there came to know of La Peyrère's earlier work, *Du Rappel des Juifs*. He cited it in the Messianic and Millenarian work by Paul Felgenhauer, *Bonum Nunciam Israel*, put out in early 1655 to show that the coming of the Jewish Messiah was imminent (Felgenhauer 1655).[6] Menasseh's discussion in this work, in Latin, of people who knew this, must have caused a stir in the Jewish community. La Peyrère himself came to Amsterdam in 1655 to arrange for the publication of *Prae-Adamitae*, and, as I found, Felgenhauer tried to arrange a debate on the pre-Adamite theory between La Peyrère and Menasseh (Popkin 1974, and 1987b, p. 100.). The latter claimed he had written an answer to La Peyrère, which was not published (and which has not been found).[7]

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[4]Five editions of La Peyrère's work appeared in 1655. Three were by Dutch publishers, one was done in Basel, and the other has not been identified. Cf. Popkin 1987b, p. 14.

[5]Freudenthal 1899 gives a list of Spinoza's books. *Prae-Adamitae* is 54. Strauss 1965, p. 264 and 327, gives a list of borrowings. There are many more than Strauss noted. See Popkin 1987a, pp. 84ff.

[6]On Menasseh's trip to the Spanish Netherlands and on Felgenhauer's book, see Popkin 1987a, pp. 99-100, and 1974, pp. 59-63.

[7]It is listed by Menasseh as a work that was ready for the press at the end of Menas-

Thus, La Peyrère was a known figure in the Jewish world of Amsterdam before Spinoza's excommunication. *Prae-Adamitae* is dedicated to all of the synagogues of the world. The book caused a lot of excitement in 1655-56 in The Netherlands, where several refutations appeared, and the work itself was banned.[8] Its revolutionary views about the Biblical text, about human history, and about Jewish history, all adopted by Spinoza, could well have become known to the young thinker in 1655, and he may even have known La Peyrère through Menasseh or others. La Peyrère was probably the first important outside influence on Spinoza.

At this point one should note that La Peyrère's views appeared in *Latin* in 1655, and in English in 1656. Spinoza apparently knew of them at least in the form that they were used by Prado. This might indicate that Spinoza could make use of a Latin text even before his excommunication. Prado, of course, knew Latin, since he had done his medical studies at a Spanish university.[9]

From what we now know of Menasseh's association with Dutch Protestants, he was part of a group that met at the home of Peter Serrarius, the Dutch chiliast (on Serrarius, see van der Wall 1987). Menasseh went to Serrarius' house on his return from the Spanish Netherlands in 1655 to announce that the coming of the Messiah was imminent. Serrarius, Adam Boreel, the leaders of the Collegiants, John Dury, the irenicist, Jan Amos Comenius, and others in this group, report they often attended services in the Portuguese Synagogue.[10] They were philo-semitic, and some, like Boreel, were working on Hebrew publications with various rabbis (Popkin 1988b). Therefore, it would not be surprising if the advanced students at the Synagogue took part in the discussions at Serrarius's house, or after

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seh 1656, p. 41. The title of it that is given is *Refutatio libri qui titulus Praeadamitae.*

[8]Popkin 1987a, p. 14 and chap. vii for details about the condemnation of the book, and the many, many refutations of it.

[9]It is often asserted that Spinoza could not have known Latin until *after* his excommunication. However, some of his teachers knew Latin since they had studied in Spain, Portugal, France or Italy, in Christian institutions. Some wrote in Latin, and may have encouraged their students to learn the language. And, for somebody whose native language was Portuguese, and who studied in Spanish, it would not be so hard to make out a Latin text.

[10]On this see Popkin 1988b and Popkin 1987a, forthcoming.

Synagogue services or at neighboring churches. So, Spinoza may have known Mennonites, Chrétiens sans église, judaizing Christians, before he was excommunicated. Serrarius, as we shall see, was an important figure in Spinoza's life after 1656 in providing the link by which Spinoza communicated with the world beyond The Netherlands.

The Quakers set up a mission in Amsterdam in 1656 (Hull 1938). A letter from the Quaker leader, William Ames, described being introduced, apparently by Serrarius (in whose house he was staying) to a Jew who by the Jews hath been cast out.[11] The account of the conversation would indicate that this was Spinoza. Elsewhere I have shown that from the date, it could not have been either Juan de Prado or Daniel Ribera. From the content of the conversation, it had to be a Jew who had been cast out for ideological reasons. So, it seems to have been young Spinoza, who expressed a desire to attend a Quaker meeting.[12]

Later letters from the Quaker mission tell of an ex-Jew who was working on translating two pamphlets of Margaret Fell into Hebrew, pamphlets aimed at converting the Jews. The task had first been entrusted to Samuel Fisher, the only early Quaker who had a university degree (at Oxford) and who knew Hebrew. Fisher was in Amsterdam for about six months in 1657, arguing with the Jews, and preparing for a journey to Rome and Constantinople to attempt to convert the Pope and the Sultan. Everything known about the ex-Jewish translator fits with what is known about Spinoza.[13] The two pamphlets were translated into Hebrew. Fisher took the manuscript of one, Margaret Fell's letter to Menasseh ben Israel, with him, and the other, her *Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham*, was published in Hebrew in 1658. I have located a copy, and with the assistance of Michael J. Signer, have published the text as *Spinoza's Earliest Publication?* (Popkin/Signer (eds.)1987, pp. 22-97, for the English and

[11]The original text is in *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 73, in the manuscript collection at the Friends Library in London. The connection between Ames and Serrarius is discussed in Van den Berg 1977, pp. 180-98.

[12]See Popkin, "Introduction" in: Popkin/Singer (eds.) 1987, pp. 1-3.

[13]Popkin, "Introduction" in: Popkin/Singer (eds.) 1987, pp.2-8. On Fisher's career, see the article on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Braithwaite 1955, pp. 288-94 and 426-28.

Hebrew texts). The text would be the only known example of Spinoza's writing in Hebrew.

Two other aspects of Spinoza's relations with the Quakers may be more important: one, the relationship of Spinoza's Bible criticism with that of Fisher, and the other, Spinoza's acceptance, at least in part, of some aspects of Quaker spiritualism.

Fisher, on his return to England (unscathed) in 1659, began battling against the Calvinist literalism of John Owen, the vice-chancellor of Oxford. Fisher's greatest writing, the *Rustick Alarm to the Rabbies*, of 1660, is a 900 page answer to the claim that the Word of God is only to be found in Scripture (Fisher 1660). Fisher raised hosts of problems about the history of the text, the corruptions of the texts, the purported Mosaic authorship, the late addition of Hebrew vowels, the supposed canonicity of some books as opposed to others, the variants in different manuscripts, and so on. What is striking is that just about *every point*, and *every* example that appears in Spinoza's *TTP* of 1670, appeared earlier in Fisher's *Rustick Alarm* in English in 1660 (Popkin 1985, pp. 219-36).

Fisher and Spinoza could have worked together on the Fell translations. An exhortation in Hebrew by Fisher is appended to the published text of the *Loving Salutation.*[14] Spinoza did not know English, as the Quaker records make clear. Margaret Fell's pamphlets had to be translated into Dutch before they could be translated into Hebrew. But, since Fisher could argue for hours with members of the Jewish community (Popkin/Signer (eds.) 1987, pp. 7-8; Caton 1689, p.40), he could obviously have talked to, or at, an ex-member of the community. The resulting presentation of Biblical criticism appears to be a joint effort, the Fisher-Spinoza theory, or the Spinoza-Fisher theory, resting on some of the previous Biblical criticism of La Peyrère. The evaluation of the import of this criticism is quite different for Fisher and for Spinoza (and for La Peyrère), and indicates the extent to which Spinoza accepted a bit of Quaker spiritualism and none of La Peyrère's Messianism.

Spinoza said, and Fisher said over and over again, that one should

[14]Popkin/Signer (eds.) 1987, pp.102-06, where the Fisher exhortation is given in

not treat a piece of parchment as if it could be the Word of God, or any so-called Divine writing that have come down to us through all sorts of tribulations of human history. La Peyrère called the Scriptures we have "a heap of Copie confusedly taken." (La Peyrère 1656, pp. 208). For Fisher the upshot of this was to seek the Light, the Spirit; for La Peyrère, to seek the true message, namely that Providential history was reaching its climax. For Spinoza the conclusion was that one should seek universal reason and understanding (*TTP* 13-16). Spinoza, when formulating what could be behind the scenes, what could be the ultimate explanation, included the Quaker possibilities, spirit and light (*TTP* 14, p. 164 lines 14-15).

However, in the late 1650's the Quakers in The Netherlands quarrelled with Serrarius and with Boreel.[15] Spinoza, attached to the Collegiants, the Chrétiens sans église, whose leader was Boreel (Schneider 1911; Kolakowski 1969) seems to have been affected by (a) the involvement of these Christians with Rabbi Nathan Shapira of Jerusalem, and (b) by the anti-religious views that Henry Oldenburg in England brought to Boreel's attention, the theses of *Les Trois Imposteurs*, and the anti-Christianity of Jean Bodin's unpublished *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*. In the period 1656-61, Boreel was urged by Oldenburg to save Christianity by refuting these views. Boreel, who died in 1661, busied himself writing a massive work, the unpublished *Jesus Christ, Legislator of the Human Race.*[16] And with preparing a Spanish edition of the *Mishna* with some of the Amsterdam rabbis.[17]

Some of Boreel's friends met with Rabbi Nathan Shapira of Jerusalem, the teacher of Nathan of Gaza, when he came to Amsterdam in 1657 seeking funds for the impoverished Jews of Palestine. Serrarius wrote John Dury about the amazing pro, or proto Christian views expressed by the rabbi, and Dury published these in an excited pamphlet (Dury 1658),

[15]On this see Hull 1938, chap. IV, and Van den Berg 1977.

[16]On this, see Popkin 1986a, pp.311-12. Boreel's opus was transcribed by Serrarius for Robert Boyle. A mixed-up copy exists in volumes XII,XIII and XV of the Boyle papers at the Royal Society in London. Henry More used a different copy in his *Theological Works*.

[17]The details on this project are given in Popkin 1988b.

indicating that the rabbi's views were a Providential sign that the Jews were about to convert. The grand mentor of 17th century Millenarians, Joseph Mede, had said that the conversion might occur by a token conversion of perhaps one Jew, as had happenned earlier in the case of Saul of Taurus,[18] Dury and Henry Jessey then undertook to raise funds for the destitute Jews of Jerusalem.[19]

Rabbi Shapira, according to Serrarius's account, offered a kind of positive Jewish rendition of Christianity. He believed that the Messiah had come, and in fact does come in every generation, but does not stay because human beings are too imperfect. The manifestations of the Messiah include Jesus as one of many, many. Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount constitute, Shapira said, the fount of all wisdom, and the finest teachings of our rabbis.[20] When Serrarius heard this (expressed in his house), he said he could feel Christ within the rabbi.[21]

No mention of Rabbi Shapira's visit appears in any data that we have about Spinoza. But, considering the excitement his visit caused among people Spinoza was associated with (especially Serrarius), it seems hard to believe that Spinoza was not aware of the rabbi's amazing views about Christianity (especially in comparison to the hostility towards Christianity of some of the rabbis at the school Spinoza attended).[22] Spinoza's

[18]Cf. Joseph Mede, Epistle XIV, Nov. 11, 1629, and Epistle XVII, Dec. 2, 1629, both to William Twisse, in Mede 1664, pp. 931 and 936-40.

[19]See Popkin 1984a, pp. 185-205. The details of the fund raising project appear on pp. 197-98. David S. Katz has discovered more about what happenned when the rabbi returned to Jerusalem with the funds, and is publishing the end of the story in a forthcoming study.

[20]Shapira's views are reported from a letter of Serrarius to Dury, in Dury 1658, pp. 12-14.

[21]Dury 1658, p. 13. Serrarius said, "When I heard these things, my bowels were inwardly stirred within me, and it seemed to me, that I did not hear a Jew, but a Christian, and a Christian of no mean understanding, who did relish the things of the Spirit, and was admitted to the inward mysteries of our Religion." Prof. Moshe Idel of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, tells me that in an unpublished sermon, date unknown, Rabbi Shapira set forth some very anti-Christian views. I have not seen the text, and do not know if it is incompatible with what the rabbi apparently told the Millenarians in Amsterdam.

[22]A fair amount of anti-Christian writing was done by members of the Amsterdam Jewish community. Saul Levi Morteira, the chief rabbi, wrote several such works, as

own statements about the role of Christ within us, and the Golden Rule being the central message of the Bible,[23] may well reflect a similar Jewish version of Christianity. And, although Spinoza was associated with spiritual Christians all of his adult life, he never accepted a supernatural view about Jesus, nor joined any Christian church or organization. His late epistolary exchange with Oldenburg show him accepting the historical human Jesus, but not the supernatural risen Jesus (see *Ep* 71, 73-75, 77-79.), a position which Oldenburg told him tears up Christianity by its roots.[24]

If Spinoza may have been influenced by the views of Rabbi Nathan Shapira, at least as reported by Spinoza's and the rabbi's millenarian friends, he may also have been influenced during the early period of his philosophical development by the views of the great Neo-Platonic Cabbalist, Abraham Cohen Herrera, who died in Amsterdam in 1635. His *Puerta del Cielo* circulated in manuscript and in a printed Hebrew abridgement of 1655 (translated by Rabbi Isaac Aboab, another important teacher at Ets Haim).[25] Some have claimed to find many similarities between Herrera's views of Divine attributes and emanation and Spinoza's basic metaphysical position, even as it was formulated as early as 1661 (see Saccaro Battisti 1985, pp. 21-58.). As in other cases discussed in this paper, we have no reference to Herrera in Spinoza's writings or letters, and a blanket condemnation of Cabbalists as triflers and irrational people (*TTP*, 11, pp. 122, line 35 - 123, line 2.) The closest textual evidence is the use by

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did Orobio de Castro. An anti-Christian work is credited to Rabbi Templo. Some of the contents of these works were later used in the Enlightenment to attack Christianity.

[23] *TTP* 5, p. 65, lines 23-24 and 14, p. 164, lines 9-10.In the latter place, Spinoza asserted, "He who firmly believes that God, out of mercy and grace with which He directs all things, forgives the sins of men, and who feels his love of God kindled thereby, he, I say, does really know Christ according to the Spirit, and Christ is in Him."

[24] Henry Oldenburg, letter to Spinoza, 11 February 1676, in Oldenburg 1986, p.189. "And the whole Christian religion and its truth rest on this article of the resurrection, and if it is taken away the mission of Christ and his heavenly teaching collapse... To seek to turn all these things into allegories is the same as to strive to overthrow the whole truth of the Gospel history." Oldenburg then reassured Spinoza that he was just presenting his view, not condemning him.

[25] On Herrera's career, see Gershom Scholem, "Einleitung" in Herrera 1974; and introductory essay by Kenneth Krabbenhoft, in: Herrera 1987.

Spinoza of the phrase "facies totius universi," which, as Wolfson pointed out is very close to the phrase used by Herrera in the original Spanish, and in the Hebrew abridgment.[26] The Latin translator, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, was in Amsterdam before 1670, studied Hebrew with rabbis there, got many of the Lurianic Cabbalistic manuscripts from an unnamed rabbi, and mingled with the spiritualistic Christians who also knew Spinoza (on Knorr von Rosenroth see Coudert 1975, pp.635-38.). Knorr might have seen the manuscript of the *Ethics*, or talked to people who were au courant with Spinoza's views. In any case, Knorr apparently translated Herrera's work after he did all the other works in Volume I of the *Kabbala Denudata.* It is printed as an appendix to volume I, with a special publication date of 1678, after Spinoza was dead.[27] However, as I have discussed elsewhere, when Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* and Knorr's *Kabbala Denudata*, Vol. I, appeared, several commentators interpreted Spinoza as a secret Cabbalist, who drew his theory from the Cabbalists, and pretended to be original.[28] The first several chapters of Knorr's text of Herrera are, in fact, almost indistinguishable from the *Ethics*, Book I. (This is not true of the Spanish original, where the Cabbalist term, En Sof, is introduced quite early in the text.)[29]

Spinoza's early philosophical development seems to have reached a plateau in 1661, after which his work enriched the theory he had formulated, a theory encompassing the political role of religion, the nature of knowledge, and the metaphysical structure of the cosmos. We know, thanks to Révah, that by 1659 he was asserting that God exists but only philosophically (Révah 1959, p. 32.).

I should like to suggest that Spinoza worked out his views while he was in close contact with the Collegiants, and that at least two of the group,

[26]Wolfson 1934, Vol. I, p.245. The Latin in Knorr von Rosenroth's translation in the *Kabbala Denudata* in 1677, "Personae Systematis Infiniti", Lib.IV, cap.3; and the Spanish is "parzupim del mundo ynfinito.".

[27]The title page of the appendix, which has its own pagination, is "Solisbaci, Typis Abrahami Lichtenthaleri I, 1678."

[28]Among those who offered this reading were J.G.Wachter, Moses Germanus, and Jacques Basnage. On this see Popkin 1987a, forthcoming.

[29]Livro I, Proposicion II, "Desta primera cauza que llaman Ensof o infinito", Herrera 1967, p. 100.

who spoke Spanish and/or Portuguese, probably played a significant role in what he was developing. They, and their friends, Serrarius and Dury, probably put him in contact with Henry Oldenburg in 1661, who became the closest intellectual friend we know of, and who was his main contact with the Republic of Letters outside of The Netherlands.

Boreel returned for good from England in 1656, where he had been involved with Menasseh ben Israel and his negotiations with the Cromwell government over the readmission of the Jews to the Commonwealth.[30] In Holland Boreel worked on three projects that we know of. One, translating and editing the *Mishna* for a Spanish edition (which he was doing with some of the Amsterdam rabbis, at least including Isaac and Jacob Abendana);[31] two, working out an answer to the thesis that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were just political opportunists creating religions in order to gain political power, by working out a "rational" defense of Christianity against atheists, deists, Jews, Muslims, pagans etc.; and lastly writing or translating the gem of rational mysticism, *Light upon the Candlestick*, into Latin. Boreel worked from 1642-46 with Rabbi Judah Leon Templo, preparing a vocalized Hebrew edition of the *Mishna*, published by Menasseh ben Israel. Boreel apparently financed the project, as well as Rabbi Templo's construction of his famous model of Solomon's Temple, and fed and housed the rabbi during the period. Boreel reported that he learned Portuguese in order to discuss the finer points of the edition with the rabbi.[32]

Peter Balling, a merchant who belonged to the Collegiants, was sent

[30]Cf. Popkin 1986b, pp. 221-223. The editors of the Oldenburg correspondence do not seem to realize that Adam Boreel was in London at the time of the discussion about re-admitting the Jews to England, and assume that the references are to one Pierre Borel. Oldenburg 1986, vol. XIII, p. 127 n. 3. However, as the material cited in my article above makes clear, Adam Boreel was actively involved in discussing the re-admission with people in London, and may have been responsible for ending the discussion of the subject.

[31]Cf. Popkin 1988b. Boreel may also have worked on this with Rabbi Templo, with whom he done the earlier Hebrew edition. On the Abendanas see David S. Katz' forthcoming study of their careers in The Netherlands and England..

[32]This is stated in a letter of Dury to Samuel Hartlib, Hartlib Papers I/6/11-14, Sheffield University Library, published in *Jewish-Christian Relations*. Also see Popkin 1988b.

from Amsterdam to Rijnsburg to discuss certain points with Spinoza, on behalf of the Amsterdam philosophical group. Balling was probably chosen because he knew Spanish (on Balling see Meinsma 1983, p.153 and 172-3; Kolakowski 1969, pp. 206-17 and Klever 1988).

Boreel as the leader of the Collegiants should have known Spinoza at least from the time, immediately after the excommunication, when the Collegiants took him in. The group was relatively small, and the arrival of its only Jewish member must have caused some stir, since Boreel and several others were very concerned to aid and abet the penultimate Millenarian development, the conversion of the Jews (Popkin 1984b, pp. 171-81). Spinoza, long before he became fluent in speaking latin, could have discussed philosophy, theology and religion in his native tongue, Portuguese, or the language of instruction at the Synagogue, Spanish, with at least Boreel and Balling. From Boreel he could have learned of the grand project that the Dutch Hebraist was working on, *Jesus Christ, Legislator of the Human Race*, as an answer to the seditious views Oldenburg had told him about, the theses of *Les Trois Imposteurs* and the anti-Christian views in Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, which Oldenburg had copied in Paris, and had shown to people in England, and had notified Boreel about (Popkin 1986a, pp.307-314, and 1988, pp. 157-60).

Spinoza's discussion in *TTP* of the political role of Moses and the non-political role of Jesus, seem to be the formulation of a different answer to the *Les Trois Imposteurs* charge than that offered by Boreel, but an answer to the same problem. Oldenburgh had told Boreel that he had heard at Oxford that it was being claimed that religions only developed for political reasons, and that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were just human politicians, cloaking their message in religious cloth. Oldenburg believed that this interpretation of religion was so dangerous that it would destroy Christianity unless it was answered by someone as wise as Boreel. The latter's answer was to claim that Jesus was a law-giver (a politician), but the law-giver for the human race. Spinoza, in his answer, portrayed Moses as the law giver for the ancient Hebrews who were in a state of nature after their escape from Egypt. They were no longer subject to Egyptian law. They would have degenerated into a Hobbesian state of nature. Moses saved the day by imposing a new law, and making it acceptable

by cloathing it with religious authority. In so doing, Moses was a benign imposter who made a new social order possible for the ancient Israelites. Jesus, on the other hand, according to Spinoza, introduced no new laws. He only stressed the moral law. Hence, Jesus was no legislator and no imposter. (Of course, Boreel and Spinoza, as Europeans of their time, took Mohammed to be a clear case of imposter; *TTP*, 5 and 17. See also Popkin 1986a).

Spinoza's analysis of the Hebrew theocracy, and its status as an ancient society that was most unlikely to be reconstituted in the 17th century,[33] may reflect some knowledge either directly or from Boreel, or later from Oldenburg, of Bodin's discussion (cf. Pines 1979, pp. 215-34; Popkin 1986a; 1988).

In mid-1661, just when Spinoza completed the fragment *TIE*, in which he developed his theory of knowledge and his dismissal of scepticism, Peter Balling came to see him in Rijnsburg. Balling came with some queries that the philosophical group in Amsterdam wanted to consult Spinoza about. Right after Balling left Spinoza, he (or maybe Boreel) composed *Light on the Candlestick*, a brief statement of the epistemology of religious mysticism. This essay appeared in Dutch, Latin and English, the Dutch attributed to Balling, the Latin to Boreel, and the English to the Quaker mystic, Benjamin Furly, whose text has been printed over and over again by the Quakers.

An examination of the text shows that it employs Spinoza's terminology, and some of the ideas that appear in *TIE*. It seems a plausible hypothesis that Spinoza and Balling discussed the *TIE* (in Spanish), and then Balling and/or Boreel used some of Spinoza's formulation as the way of grounding their own theory of non-denominational religious mysticism. We do not know if Spinoza agreed with them, or with the use of his ideas in this context. However, this suggests that Spinoza and the Collegiants were in close intellectual relationship at the time when Spinoza was emerging as an original thinker. It is Spinoza's transformation of Descartes's epistemology, probably influenced by Neo-Platonic formulations, that was

[33]Spinoza may have been concerned about views such as those presented in the often reprinted work of Petrus Cunaeus on the Hebrew Republic, suggesting that it be a model for seventeenth century states.

taken over by Balling and Boreel (cf. Kolakowski 1969, pp. 206-17, and Popkin 1984, pp. 14-28, esp. pp.26-28).

And later on in 1661, when Boreel was dying, his English friend, Henry Oldenburg, now secretary of the newly founded Royal Society of England, came to The Netherlands. Oldenburg was in correspondence with Serrarius. He had a long acquaintance with Boreel, at whose home he met Menasseh ben Israel in London.[34] He was involved with John Dury, then an exile after the Restoration of Charles II, and was soon to become his son-in-law.

The Spinoza correspondence gives no clue as to why Oldenburg sought out Spinoza when he got to The Netherlands. They spent a day together at Rijnsburg, and became intellectual friends for life.

Why should Oldenburg, the confident of leading scientists and religious leaders, busy with establishing the Royal Society, with encouraging Boreel's projects, seek out Spinoza, who had not published anything (except perhaps the Hebrew translation of Margaret Fell's pamphlet)? Oldenburg was only in Holland for a short time, and knew many scientists and theologians there. He took time off from his busy schedule to visit the unknown Spinoza, and then was explaining to him the importance of the Royal Society, offering to publish Spinoza's radical writings, relaying Spinoza's views to Robert Boyle, and Boyle's to Spinoza. Oldenburg was part of what Charles Webster has called "the spiritual brotherhood" (Webster 1975, chap. II), and was no doubt alerted to Spinoza's existence and importance by other members, such as his friends, Boreel and Serrarius. The fact that he found Spinoza so compatible and *sympathique* suggests that Spinoza must have appeared to him as like other members of "the spiritual brotherhood". Oldenburg's correspondence up to, and even beyond Spinoza's death,[35] showed that regardless of their great differences of views,

[34]Cf. Oldenburg's letter to Menasseh ben Israel, 25 July 1657, in Oldenburg 1965, pp. 124-25. Oldenburg stated that he had met Menasseh and talked to him at Boreel's home in London.

[35]In Henry Oldenburg's letter to Leibniz, 22 Feb. 1677, he said, "I cannot even guess for what reason you did not deliver my letter to Spinoza". This must refer to a letter after the last one published in the *Opera Posthuma*. Cf. Oldenburg 1986, vol. XIII, pp. 219-220. This letter also suggest that Leibniz may have seen the *Ethics* before it was published. Oldenburg said in the sentence following, "I do not understand what

he accepted Spinoza as a co-equal truth seeker from then on.

What does all of this indicate? I think it shows that there is much more to the story of Spinoza's development than a simple passage from orthodox Judaism to monotheistic metaphysics. Ideas from Jewish rebels like Prado and Ribera were fused with those of La Peyrère and Samuel Fisher to make up Spinoza's powerful Biblical criticism. His answer to the problems posed by the early versions of *Les Trois Imposteurs* and by Bodin's dialogues, enabled him to offer a positive explanation in naturalistic terms of the roles of Moses and Jesus. The Jewish version of Christianity offered by Rabbi Nathan Shapira probably provided Spinoza with his way of presenting Christianity without supernatural elements. By 1661 Spinoza had put this all together in a metaphysics combining Cartesian elements and Neo-Platonic ones, possibly taken from Leone Hebreo and Abraham Cohen Herrera, with a little bit of Quaker spiritualism. The system was so appealing to the Chrétiens sans église that Balling and Boreel made it into a basis for rational mysticism, and Henry Oldenburg welcomed Spinoza into the spiritual brotherhood of the new scientists and theologians and into The Republic of Letters.

Spinoza's journey from the Synagogue to the spiritual brotherhood started with the outburst of Bible criticism within the Synagogue, the excitement of La Peyrère's appearance on the intellectual scene, then moved to the world of the Collegiants, the Quakers, and other non-denominational Christians in Holland, then to the international stage. Various ingredients from each part were fused together in his brilliant, original metaphysics for a world without supernaturalism.

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metaphysical demonstrations you mean, which are said in your letter from Amsterdam to have been read and scrutinized by you, since you have concealed the author of them". Leibniz's letter to Oldenburg has not yet been found.

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RESUMEE

A la lumière de recherches récentes, il devient possible de mieux suivre l'itinéraire de Spinoza, de la communauté juive d'Amsterdam jusqu'au statut de penseur indépendant. Cet article examine l'influence possible des idées d'Isaac la Peyrère sur Spinoza même après son excommunication, l'impact possible du philo-sémitisme chrétien de Serrarius, Boreel, Dury et des Quakers sur Spinoza, et les relations que celui-ci a entretenues avec les Quakers juste après l'excommunication. Le quaker Samuel Fisher semble avoir travaillé avec Spinoza et tous les deux ont développé le même type de critique biblique, en ayant recours aux mêmes exemples pour démontret que la Bible est une ouevre humaine. Il n'est pas impossible que Spinoza ait été informé de l'interpretation juive du christianisme que Rabbi Nathan Shapira de Jérusalem avait présentée à Serrarius et à ses amis millénaristes, et que ses propres thèses procheétiennes reflètent celles de Shapira. l'insistance de Spinoza sur l'enseignement moral de Jésus paraît faire écho aux remarques de Shapira (transmises par Serrarius) au sujet du Sermon sur la Montagne.

Une autre influence juive possible est constituée par l'œuvre d'Abraham Cohen Herrera, le grand cabbaliste néo-platonicien. Sa *Puerto del Cielo* circulait en manuscrit aux Pays-Bas, et une version abrégée en hébreu était parue en 1655. Les premiers lecteurs du Livre I de l'*Ethique* l'ont jugé pratiquement impossible à distinguer de la version latine de Herrera publiée dans la *Kabbala Denudata.*

Vers 1661, Spinoza semble avoir élaboré les fondements de son système. L'article suggère qu'il a développé ses idées au cours de discussions avec les Collegiants, surtout avec Boreel et Balling, qui parlaient l'espagnol et le portugais. Boreel s'efforçait (sous l'incitation de Henry Oldenburg) de réfuter les *Trois Imposteur* et le *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* de Bodin; ce travail a pu influencer le développement de la théorie spinoziste sur le rôle des religions dans les affaires humaines. Les idées initiales des Spinoza, pénétrées de cartésianisme, ont été utilisées par les Collegiants pour exposer leur propre mysticisme rationnel.

En 1661, Oldenburg rencontre Spinoza, probablement par l'intermédiaire de ses amis Serrarius et Boreel; Oldenburg voit en lui un membre de la "fraternité spirituelle" et contribue à le faire pénétrer dans la République des Lettres.

Tout cela indique que l'évolution de Spinoza ne peut se réduire à un simple passage du judaisme orthodox à la métaphysique monothéiste. Spinoza a juxtaposé des éléments qui venaient de La Peyrère, des Quakers, des "Chrétiens sans Eglise", de Nathan Shapira et de Herrera; il les a combiné avec des éléments cartésiens; et il en a fait un système unique, sa métaphysique pour un monde dépourvu de surnaturel.